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Press Release

REPS. TIM BISHOP, STEVE ISRAEL HOLD EMERGENCY MEETING ON BNL REACTOR

Community Advocates Discuss Plan to Seal off Reactor for 87,000 Years, in Lieu of Cleaning the Site

Upton, NY- Today, Congressmen Tim Bishop and Steve Israel held an emergency meeting of the Brookhaven National Laboratory's (BNL) Community Advisory Council (CAC). The subject of the meeting was a reported plan by the Department of Energy to possibly seal off BNL's radioactive graphite research reactor for the next 87,000 years rather than removing the reactor and cleaning the area entirely. Bishop and Israel heard from the community and began to formulate a Congressional response.

"Today's emergency meeting was extremely helpful and informative and I was very impressed with how engaged the members of the CAC are," Bishop said. "It is important to recognize that we are at the beginning of an important process that I will remain involved with. There is a consensus that we must not let financial concerns drive the decision-making process. Any decision must be based on sound science and concern for the health of our community."

"Long Island has a simple message for the Department of Energy: the safety of our community must be the only consideration in deciding what action to take," Israel said. "Our families should not have to spend the next 87,000 years worrying if their drinking water is safe every time they turn on the kitchen sink."

The Department of Energy and Brookhaven National Lab are in the process of formulating several plans for the long-term management of the radioactive graphite research reactor site. Under consideration are three possible plans: 1) to seal off the site for the 87,000 years it would take for the material would be safe, at a cost of $275,000 a year, 2) to remove most of the radiation, but leave one of the reactor's buildings in place, at a cost of $40 million, or 3) to clean up the site entirely, by completely removing both the reactor and the radiation at a cost of $96 million. There are reports that the Department of Energy is pursuing the cheapest option in the near-term, sealing off the site. Both Bishop and Israel argued that cost should not be the driving factor in the decision-making process. They believe that public safety and the health of the environment need to come first. Some advocates have raised concerns about contamination to the aquifer that supplies local drinking water.

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